

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEXTER

By Tian Botha

The Dexter breed is a small, friendly, dual-purpose breed used for milk and beef production. Their versatility is one of their greatest assets, and they can be kept and farmed successfully on smaller farms.

Gender characteristics must be clearly visible and animals must have a good frame, length, width, depth, capacity, balance and symmetry.

CHARACTER

Temperament: Calm and placid, yet alert.

Gender characteristics:

- * **Bull:** Strong, masculine with good general muscle development particularly on forearm, shoulder, eye muscle and hindquarter. No excessive fat particularly in the flanks, brisket and around the tailhead. Testes well-developed and of uniform size carried above the hocks, sheath not pendulous.
- * **Cow:** Feminine appearance, wedge-shaped outline, especially when in milk. Neither over developed muscling nor massive and heavy. No excessive fat deposit on any part of the body. Well-developed reproductive organs, heifer's udder and teat development must be visible.

CONFORMATION

1. Head and neck

- * **Head Bull:** Masculine with good width, medium length and prominent eye brows
- * **Head Cow:** Feminine with adequate width and medium length without prominent features.
- * **Muzzle:** Wide, oval and strong.
- * **Mouth:** Wide and strong with broad lips.
- * **Nostrils:** Large and oval.
- * **Teeth:** Large and strong, incisors fitting well against the pad.
- * **Horns:** Small and thick, growing outward with a forward curve on the male and upward on the female. May be polled as well.
- * **Ears:** Medium size, flexible fine texture, covered with long hair along the upper inner section.
- * **Eyes:** Large, bright with a placid expression.
- * **Jaws:** Deep and strong, well developed and evenly aligned.
- * **Neck Bull:** Medium length and deep, strong attached to the head and shoulders. More developed in the bull with a well developed hump.
- * **Neck Cow:** Feminine, not as deep as with the bull, with fine pleats.



2. Forequarter

- * **Shoulders:** Shoulder blade to slope slightly forward from top to bottom with the desired rounding and strong muscle attachment to the chest, withers and neck. Good width between the shoulder points, however, not prominent. Chest depth in proportion to wither height i.e., a good relative chest depth and width. Well-muscled forearm in bulls.

3. Centre piece

Long, wide and deep with good spring of rib (i.e., capacity) well blended into fore- and hindquarter.

- * **Back:** Straight top line, long, broad with full muscling.
- * **Loin:** Broad and well-muscled.
- * **Ribs:** Broad, long and well-sprung, slating slightly to the rear.

4. Hindquarter

Long, wide and deep with well developed muscles joining the hindquarter firmly to the centrepiece. In the bull, the frame is covered with muscling, while cows may show more prominence in the hips. Hips wide and in proportion to the rest of the body. Good thurl and pin bone width. Rump long and wide, with a slight fall to pin bones. Thighs wide, well-muscled, extending below the flank to a well developed second thigh. Tailhead straight and horizontal. Tail long with a large switch without any prominent attachment (Baboon tail).

5. Legs, hooves, stance and stride

- * **Legs:** Strong oval and widely placed to facilitate an easy free moving stride.
- * **Joints:** Strong, well developed and dry.
- * **Hocks:** Broad, strong and dry with the correct angle and a well defined hamstring.
- * **Pastern joints:** Strong, dry and elastic with the correct angle.
- * **Hooves:** Uniform, of medium size, oval, deep and close together.

6. Udder and teats

A capacious, well-attached udder of high quality, revealing high production potential. The udder must be long, broad, of moderate depth with four functional quarters.

Udder should not present lower than the hocks and a higher attachment is favourable. Pliable and elastic in texture. Heifers must display good udder and teat development.

- * **Teats:** Uniform, cylindrical and of medium size and length.
- * **Lacteal veins:** Well-developed, long and winding with large milk wells.

7. Reproductive organs

- * **Female:** Well-developed without visible signs of under development or deformation.
- * **Male:** Testicles firm, of equal size, well developed with a fairly short seminal cord. No straight sided, split, wedge shaped, Hypo plastic, small or twisted more than 45 degrees is acceptable. Sheath should be controllable, short and straight, fitting in with the bottom line.

8. Skin and hair

Thick, ample, pliable and loose skin with short glossy hair, with due allowance for the season and age.

9. Pigmentation and Colour

- * **Pigmentation:** Adequate pigmentation.
- * **Colours:** Black, Red and Dun
- * **Male:** Limited white allowed around testis area, further no white on male animals allowed.
- * **Female:** White on the udder and limited to the area behind the navel only.
- * **Black:** Limited white in the switch allowed.
- * **Red & Dun:** Predominantly white in the tail switch allowed. Pigmentation on the nose, eyelids and genital organs flesh coloured with amber hooves. Limited smokey pigmentation on the nose and hoofs allowed.

1. Height

- * **Bull:** Ideal of 120 cm measured at hip height.
- * **Cow:** Ideal of 112 cm measured at hip height.

UNDESIRABLE AND DISQUALIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Undesirable Characteristics

- * Tendency to be abnormally large or small in size

- * Pigeon-toed
- * Excessive white tail switch or bottom-line
- * Excessive fat deposits on females
- * Hocks showing defects
- * Small pendulous udder with oversize teats
- * Twisted testicles
- * Hollow or bowed back
- * Too masculine females or too feminine bulls
- * "Baboon tail"

- * In extreme cases, any of the above ten undesirable characteristics.
- * Straight hocked
- * Underdeveloped or deformed genitals
- * Any signs of infertility
- * Colour assortments
- * Skew tail attachment
- * Long or short lower jaw
- * Skewed face
- * Devils-grip
- * Ill temperament
- * Any testicle deformities

Disqualifications

A disqualification is a deviation that renders an animal unfit for breeding.

CONFORMATION ILLUSTRATIONS

